

The mission of the Youth Advocacy Project (YAP) is to work collectively with our partners throughout the community to improve the lives of Routt County youth with multiple risk factors, youth who have special needs, and/or youth who experience socio-economic marginalization.



FALL 2017 NEWSLETTER



Letter from the Executive Director The Health and Healing Outcomes of Music and Art

Music and art are around us everywhere; if we listen, the Aspen trees quake and sing to us throughout the summer, and if we open our imaginations we see that the sunset and the soft cast of pink, filtered light over our Colorado Rocky Mountains at the day's end is a magnificent landscape painting. Music is simply a wave of energy that involves a series of frequencies, which we hear as tones and feel as vibrations that are strung together and move through the air and space around us and through us. Music speaks across cultures and traditions in a profound manner, neurologically and emotionally. Art often has a similar impact on us, making us feel something deeply on an emotional and sometimes primal physiological level as well.

There is an abundance of evidence-based neuroscience research nationwide on the healing and therapeutic benefits of both art and music. CSFF continues to be so grateful and proud of Katy Thiel and Northwest Colorado Health's Youth Resiliency Program, which integrates art therapy into its curriculum, and has meaningful impact on local youth. This newsletter highlights two relatively new Routt County programs: Music with Vision and Perry-Mansfield in the Schools. Both are positioned to increase youth resiliency, promote youth engagement in school, while serving as a vehicle to connect young people with themselves as empowered and valued individuals in our community.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara Craig-Scheckman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Sara Craig-Scheckman
Executive Director





Infusing Music and Performing Arts into the Classroom

Participation in music and performing arts can have a positive impact on youth therapeutically, academically and developmentally. More and more, there are intentional collaborations between schools and nonprofits to bring music and the arts into the classroom, using it as a teaching tool to advance resiliency, build confidence, and improve communication and problem solving skills. There are two new programs in Routt County that integrate various therapeutic and educational components into the students' experience.

Music with Vision is a grassroots program offering young people the opportunity to learn to play music while acquiring skills to decrease stress factors and to make healthy choices. This multi-faceted collaboration includes agencies such as the Northwest Colorado Community Health Partnership, CMC, Northwest Colorado Health, Sk8 Church and local musicians. Initial funding for this pilot project was provided by the Craig-Scheckman Family Foundation and West Slope Casa. The partnership envisions youth that have respect and compassion for others, experience healthy relationships with self and community, and who develop self-confidence and coping skills. Henry Howard, who facilitates organizational development and programming for Music with Vision, wanted to “mentor youth in a different way.” Rather than just providing music lessons for students, he wanted to incorporate resiliency training with “music as the vehicle, the tool, the connection point.” Howard says the first step is connectedness - getting to know the students on a personal level. It is highly important for students to become comfortable with each other as well as with their music instructors so they can build trust and share. Lessons are a safe place for these young people and become the platform for problem solving. Katy Thiel of Northwest Colorado Health developed the ten week Music with Vision curriculum, which is taught at CMC. Built into the music lessons are avenues for making realistic plans, moving towards goals and seeing a crisis as manageable. By the end of the semester the goal is for students to have an awareness of how to make healthy choices, as well as have a community of musicians they can count on.

Erick Ocampo immigrated to the United States from Nicaragua 18 years ago and has been living in Steamboat Springs for ten of those years. He is one of the musicians who was key in getting Music with Vision up and running. Ocampo said that he had no specific plan, but for him the idea of Music with Vision was “a passion. It is something that is within myself” that he wanted to share with young people, especially children trying to relate within the community. Ocampo wondered, “How can we get a connection for everybody? Music is universal. We play music, we connect.”



Music with Vision
by John F. Russell/*Steamboat Today*

The program is targeted towards young individuals between the ages of 13 and 25. In addition to learning music and skills to manage life's stressors, Sk8 church is providing a venue for Music with Vision activities and events. Sk8 Church has even built a 24x10 foot stage and are installing a sound system for these budding musicians, all in a dedicated safe and sober space. In addition to organizing and producing a music event, students will write music and create a CD. Music therapy is a growing practice to deal with deeper social issues, and is a healthy and inspiring outlet for struggling youth.

The performing arts are also a channel for self-expression, creativity, youth development, and academic engagement.

Last year, Perry-Mansfield Performing Arts School & Camp launched a pilot project, called Perry-Mansfield in the Schools, in the Hayden and South Routt communities. Its aim was to introduce the performing arts in the classroom to enhance academic achievement and youth development skills that are critical for youth, particularly those who are experiencing poverty or personal crisis, so they can learn how to positively cope with life's challenges. This unique program exposes all students in classrooms to the performing arts and the creation of new work through applications of theatre techniques and movement as a method to understand the curriculum. Now in its second year, Perry-Mansfield Executive Director Nancy Engelken is confident they can build on the first year's accomplishments. Initially thinking the program would serve 280 children, faculty hired by Perry-Mansfield were so enthusiastic, they expanded into additional Hayden and South Routt classrooms and were able to serve over 500 children last year. Perry-Mansfield faculty and district teaching staff collaborated around curriculum and classroom goals, and then Perry-Mansfield faculty designed activities for the children to create new work. Faculty taught in science, English, theatre, speech, social studies, history, physical education, and geography classes. Faculty included a Nashville-based singer/songwriter, two Denver-based theatre teachers, as well as local dance instructors.

District teachers said that through the Perry-Mansfield in the Schools initiative, students achieved things they never imagined they could. It provided a niche for them to excel socially and academically, and there was increased peer acceptance.

Dee Covington, who is the Education Director for Denver's Curious Theatre as well as the Program Director for the Young Playwrights Festival, worked with a South Routt High School English class that was studying the book, *Black Like Me*. Covington posed questions such as, "What does it mean to be African American or a person of color in South Routt?" and, "What is important in the culture of South Routt, and how do those values measure up in the United States?" The students came up with a series of skits, all of which were extremely powerful. One skit explored guns, hunting, and responsible gun use, and contrasted these ideals with irresponsible gun use, public policy and school shootings. Engelken said it was "a powerful basis for literary interpretation." These skits had a high level of educational value, developed confidence in the students, and taught them how to work together as peers. Engelken pointed out that the "outcomes weren't just academic but were youth development."

Sari Davidson, a local former professional dancer, worked with two Hayden Elementary School classes to create a new dance to depict the water cycle. The class discussed what the water cycle is and created movement to demonstrate all of its aspects while learning about the elements of dance. The children were able to utilize physical activity while illustrating learning in a new way.

As is the case in most communities across the nation, some students have learning challenges, others feel that they look or act differently from their peers or feel ostracized by their peers. District teachers said that through the Perry-Mansfield in the Schools initiative, students achieved things they never imagined they could. It provided a niche for them to excel socially and academically, and there was increased peer acceptance. Many students were more engaged and interested with this new method of learning. For teachers whose classrooms were utilized, the program also had an incredible impact on them. One teacher said that it provided professional development opportunities



Perry-Mansfield in the Schools – Hayden Water Cycle Dance

for her and fundamentally changed the way she taught her students. Engelken noted that Kendra DeMicco of Hayden Schools and David Luongo of South Routt Schools recognized the importance and specialness of Perry-Mansfield in the Schools and really stepped up as site coordinators for the program last year. Engelken said that they did “such important pro bono work for us, and that is one of the biggest instruments of success – that level of ownership” within the school districts.

Last year, Perry-Mansfield received a large one-year, non-renewable grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, the only arts education grant awarded in Colorado. While continuing to receive local funding from the Craig-Scheckman Family Foundation, Yampa Valley Bank and others, the program will be an abbreviated version of last year’s. While Engelken is working hard to find additional funding sources and other collaborative opportunities to continue building the program in Hayden and South Routt, there is a possibility for it to expand into Steamboat in coming years. Performing arts are very important in general; performing arts in the classroom are a valuable means of participation, demonstration and non-traditional learning that engages children, and challenges students and teachers alike.

We look forward to partnering with both Music with Vision and Perry-Mansfield as they continue to evolve and impact our community of youth.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

November 1

YAP Grant Applications Due

November 20 - 24

Office Closed – Thanksgiving

December 1

YAP Grant Notifications

December 22 - January 8

Office Closed for the Holidays

Vision

YAP envisions an engaged and diverse Routt County community that strategically collaborates to strengthen the optimal potential of vulnerable youth and families.

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